

will last so long, without diminution of strength, that, although simplification, it is thought, is essential to the practical use of the electric cable, even in the organized communication between the different parts of the same public or other building.—The directors of the South Eastern Railway are so satisfied with the operation of the submarine telegraph, that they are preparing for its extension across the channel from Folkestone to Boulogne. The Folkestone Custom-house is already made the focus of a ganglion or plexus of the wire-nerve on their way to France.—“Received by Lightning—Printed by Steam!” is the stereotyped head of the telegraphic news in the *Buffalo Courier*.

DECORATION OF THEATRES.

At the last meeting of the Decorative Art Society, Dec. 9, a discussion upon this subject was resumed by introductory observations from Mr. Cooper, in which, referring to the remarks in Mr. Dwyer's paper upon the plan of a theatre, he suggested that another form offered considerable and, probably, greater advantages. He described it as the oval, which he would have divided by its long diameter, one-half apportioned to the audience, the other to the stage, &c. He alluded to several continental theatres approaching to this form in construction—the circus of Franconi, Napoleon's grand amphitheatre at Milan, the Roman circus at Verona, and the Coliseum. As painted or shifting scenery was not employed for the Greek drama, the proscenium was richly decorated with ranges of marble columns, statues, gilding, and bronze. The advantages of the semicircular and semi-elliptical forms in plan beyond those of the horseshoe form, were enlarged upon, and the Olympic theatre at Vicenza, in Lombardy, built by Palladio, was said to exhibit them in a perfect manner. This was erected by order of the Olympic Academy of Vicenza, whose members directed him to build it in accordance with the ancient plan, that they might afford their compatriots an idea of the magnificence of ancient theatrical exhibitions.

The discussion was supported by Messrs. Parris, Seddon, Crabb, and others, and the following observations are selected from others of interest. A spheroidal form of ceiling, it was urged, offers several advantages, influencing ventilation and lighting, as well as contributing much towards a picturesque and pleasing effect. The decorations of the ceiling in the Italian Opera House, it was observed, had been copied from one in the Ducal Palace at Mantua (a coloured plate from Gruner's work was exhibited). It was considered questionable as to whether the example was suitable for such an extensive surface or not, and that, admitting the propriety of selection, the figures did not hold their just proportions; the great distance at which they are required to be seen had not been sufficiently regarded in the colouring, and the peculiar haze in a large theatre, as well as some other general principles in colouring, demanded a different treatment. The use of bright colours, such as vermilion, it was remarked, ought to be sparing, and indeed restricted to a very limited application. Mr. Parris supported this opinion by references to works by Raffaele and Rembrandt, and he recommended Indian red and Venetian red, when supported by a bold mass of shadow, as producing a more powerful effect. He also objected to the prevalent use of bright colours for interior decorations, from their harsh, and, owing to the general absence of green, fatiguing impression. It was remarked that the decorations of the Italian Opera House appear most satisfactory when the seats are vacated, and, consequently, that the design did not embrace some essential principles. Encaustic painting was alluded to, and its durability and effect were said to have been proved equal to fresco, when subject to the influence of gas and vitiated atmospheres. Coloured decorations, when composed of sprawling cupids or allegories, were slightly mentioned. Some suggestions were made that rich fabrics, coloured as Persian carpets, cloth of gold, &c., when thrown over the fronts of the boxes, would conduce to a rich and gay appearance, quite distinct from any obtained by painting. The Opera Comique at Paris was described. A quiet, satisfactory, yet rich effect, it was said, is there displayed, together with some important matter in construction. The ornaments were said to be composed of

stamped brass. A description was given of Covent Garden theatre, as it was when first opened. It was designed by Smirke, and painted under his directions. The drop scene was painted by William Dixon, in subdued colours, with sienna columns, and statuary with broad masses of shadow, producing a forcible impression, by powerfully enhancing the effect of colours on scenery and dresses on the stage. The repose conveyed on the fall of the curtain was said to have been agreeable, but splendour was not at all aimed at.

At the first general meeting in January next, a paper on “Stained-glass windows chronologically considered,” will be read.

WORKS OF THE ART-UNION OF LONDON.

At the present moment, the council of this association have a number of works in progress. Mr. W. Finden is commissioned to engrave Hilton's fine picture, “The Crucifixion,” now in the Town Hall at Liverpool. Mr. Lightfoot is proceeding with “Sabrina,” after a picture by Mr. Frost, A.R.A. Mr. MacIise, R.A., as we understand, has liberally prepared an entirely fresh drawing of his “Spirit of Chivalry,” purposely to be engraved for the society. Mr. Selous' painting, “The Citizens of Calais,” from his prize cartoon, should be ready next month. In the way of sculpture, Mr. Marshall, A.R.A., is proceeding with his figure, “The dancing girl reposing.” Mr. Foley is making a reduced copy of his figure, “Innocence,” (submitted in competition for the society's premium,) to be executed in statuary porcelain; and Mr. Kirk has reduced his “Iris ascending,” exhibited at the same time as the last, to be executed in bronze,—and very charming things they will both make. In order to give an impetus to the art of casting in iron, and to spread abroad copies of a fine work in a durable material, Mr. Nixon, the sculptor, is commissioned to make a reduced copy of the antique figure, “Thalia,” in the gallery of antiquities at the British Museum, to be cast in iron by the Coalbrookdale company. Mr. Wilson is executing a medal of Flaxman, and a number of other works are under consideration, including a new feature in the form of an illustrative wood-engraving. A temporary stoppage has occurred in the delivery of the print for last year. The immediate demand was so much greater than was anticipated (as will at once be admitted when it is heard that, within three days after the print was due, more than 10,000 copies were delivered over the country), and so many more plates than was expected have been required, in consequence of the delicacy of the original engraving, that the delivery has been unavoidably stopped for a few weeks. Twenty-two electrotypes plates have been already made! In operations so extensive and so new (so marvellous they would have been thought a few years ago), casualties can scarcely be guarded against.

“The Convalescent,” due to the subscribers of 1845, which has been in the hands of Mr. Doo for several years, has not yet reached the council, and they, as well as the subscribers, have just reason to complain. Let them make what arrangements they may, and with whatever judgment and forethought,—if the artists commissioned do not keep faith with them, all their efforts are, of course, useless. The engravings after Mr. Uwins, R.A., for the current year, are nearly completed, and so will be ready for distribution in good time.

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

In clearing the site of the late fire at Gravesend, it is remarkable that, until the last week or two, volumes of smoke, and even bodies of flame, have occasionally burst forth from the ruins. The insurances, to the extent of 30,000*l.*, have been all adjusted, and an agreement has been come to that the whole line of the re-erecting is to be set back full nine feet, so as considerably to improve both the town and the properties themselves.—The erection of a church, or chapel, in the Gothic style, from designs by Mr. Pugin, it is said, is contemplated by the Roman Catholics at Salisbury.—Maddington parish church was re-opened on Wednesday week, after being extensively repaired and restored. The aisles have been repaired, the stone work made good, a stone pulpit erected, and the pews renewed,

in oak, with increased accommodation. A Gothic “Temperance hall” has been erected at Cirencester, at a cost of about 1,500*l.*—Baths and wash-houses have been erected at Cheltenham, at a cost of 4,500*l.*, of which 700*l.* were contributed by a lady, Mrs. Becker, of Green-park.—The demolition of the old town-hall, Doncaster, to make way for the new, was last week nearly completed. It has been proposed to preserve, in one form or other, the remains, now exposed to view, of the ancient church of St. Mary Magdalene, incorporated with the old town-hall; or rather, a portion of which church constituted the latter building.—On a spot, in a field at Melton, belonging to Mrs. Barker, of Ipswich, and hitherto remarked for the luxuriance of the crops raised on it, the sub-soil was lately found to be full of broken tiles of unusual size and thickness, and manifestly of Roman manufacture. A further cutting revealed an entire Tegularium, or tile-work, with regular layers of tiles, and a large quantity of brick-earth, moulded into form, and ready for burning, with a layer of sand between each. A strong pavement of carburetted earth, with ashes, &c., completed the evidence of the real nature of this interesting relic of old times.—The town council of Edinburgh are in a quandary about a responsibility to the extent of 60,000*l.*, under which they lie to certain proprietors of the banks of North Esk and Logan Burn, in the event of the wall of the water company's reservoir in that quarter giving way; a risk which it appears is becoming gradually more and more imminent, since the company do not appear to care about the risk or liability of either council or proprietors; having not only already raised the wall to a greater height than heretofore, but manifested a decided intention to raise it higher still; “thereby greatly increasing the danger of the reservoir bursting,”—an event which would far outshine the distressing occurrence at the Harrington Water-works at Liverpool, end of last year. The council are naturally “anxious to rid themselves of all connection with it.”—The Commissioners of Woods and Forests have requested the Edinburgh Council to intimate to them the probable discovery of the remains of Queen Mary, in Trinity College Church, which is to be taken down. If found, the remains are to be removed.—The necessary steps have been taken to obtain the Aberdeen Improvement Act, already alluded to; in course of next session, Old Aberdeen intends to have improvements of its own, and hence does not co-operate with the city on this point.

Correspondence.

DECORATIONS AT SOCIETY OF ARTS.—
BARRY'S PICTURES.

SIR,—It is the fact, as you suspect, that the chief part of the cost of decorating the hall was presented to the Society of Arts by Mr. Hay. The allowance made for the repairs did not reach half the actual cost. It may also be stated, that the society is indebted to Messrs. Minton and Co., the manufacturers, and to Mr. Blashfield, their agent, for the present of the Mosaic pavement.

It is not true that the process of cleaning the pictures, in the least degree caused the stains now apparent in the Orpheus. The cleaning was most judiciously and carefully done under Mr. Hay's personal directions; and its effect has been beneficial to all the pictures—even to the Orpheus, for it has shewn the mischief that exists and was done some dozen years ago. I believe Messrs. Mulready, R.A., Eastlake, R.A., and Redgrave, A.R.A., among other artists, have seen these pictures since they were thus cleaned, and I have heard that they unanimously agreed that the cleaning had been judiciously done, and was a perfectly proper step, and that the pictures were in excellent state. But certain members, who were parties to the varnishing and tampering with the Orpheus years ago, now alarmed at the mischief they did, protest that this mischief is the result of the cleaning, in order to shift the disgrace from themselves. And what makes the attempt the more impudent is, that one of them, without the slightest pretence to artistic or critical knowledge, is said to have been a disappointed contractor for painting the hall.

A MEMBER.